

PORTER CLAY HOUSE ·
JACKSONVILLE ILLINOIS·

Morgan Co.

HABS· NO. ILL· 226

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Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
DISTRICT NO. ILL-2

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
· EDGAR E. LUNDEEN - DISTRICT OFFICER ·
CORN BELT BANK BUILDING - BLOOMINGTON, ILL.

"PORTER CLAY HOUSE"
Jacksonville, Morgan County, Illinois

Owner. Ella, Agnes, Leah, and John N. Kennedy.

Date of Erection. First floor and servants' quarters about 1836. Second floor added 1851-1854. Other small additions about 1890.

Architect. None.

Builder. Unknown.

Present Condition. The original and main part of the house are in a pretty fair state of preservation. The west wing, added later, has deteriorated considerably. The servants' quarters have been detached and moved to the rear, now being used as a garage. The rear portion, considerably different in detail from the original house, was apparently moved in on the lot and added to the house.

Number of Stories. Front section--two stories; rear--one.

Materials of Construction. The foundations are brick. The framing is oak, except in the west wing where joists are white pine. The exterior is wood siding with wood shingle roof. Sheathing on original portion is oak--set vertically and pinned at base and plate with wooden pins.

Other Existing Records. No records, except such written data as mentioned in the references.

Additional Data. The Porter Clay House , which is located at 1019 West State Street, Jacksonville, Illinois, was the home of the brother of Henry Clay, noted statesman.

Porter Clay seemed, in early life, to be destined to a political career in Kentucky, but he became a Baptist minister in 1815 and was an early pioneer to Jacksonville, Illinois.

He was married to the widow of Gen. Martin Hardin and the mother of Col. John J. Hardin, about 1830. In 1832, Samuel D. Lockwood sold six acres of land to Porter and Elizabeth Clay, really to her.

The original house, consisting of the present first-story rooms--hall, parlor, living room, dining room, rear bedroom, and kitchen--was presumably built shortly after the Clays acquired the site, in 1833. The house was originally of Colonial design and fronted east.

The old building now situated south of the house until recent years stood west of the house, the north end being about on a line with the kitchen porch. The three rooms were used as laundry, wood and coal house, and man-servant's quarters. A shed was between this old building (now used as a garage), thus connecting it in this way to the west wing of the main house--there being no inside passage connections, however.

Between the dining room and this building, was a paved courtyard. A trellis, covered with grape vines,

angled to the southwest from the kitchen porch, dividing this court-yard and screening two of the rooms from view to the east.

South of the brick pavement was a large snowball bush. A narrow brick walk south of the building ran west to the driveway, which was separated from the neighboring drive by a row of cedar trees. A row of oak and mulberry trees extended from the north end of the building to W. State Street.

South of the brick court-yard and partly concealed by a group of persimmon trees, was the old carriage house, and further south was the barn yard containing stables and cow shed.

This home was a very attractive place and one of the show grounds of the city. It is likely that Henry Clay was often a visitor and quite probable that Daniel Webster was a guest at the time of his visit to Jacksonville in 1837.

In 1849, Mrs. Clay sold her home to Albert G. Caldwell in the name of his wife, Eleanor C. Caldwell. It was about this time that the west wing and the main house second-story portions were built.

The house was conveyed to Edward I. Eno in June, 1854, and in turn transferred to M. P. and A. E. Ayers in 1860.

On June 25, 1863, the house was conveyed to Rev. Wm. D. Sanders. Dr. Sanders, who was a professor of

Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in Illinois College from 1854 to 1868, was a powerful anti-slavery orator of the day and the founder of the Young Ladies Athenaeum at Jacksonville in 1864.

During this time, the doors of the old house swung wide for guests of the family, and Athenaeum Levees were a feature of the city's social life for years. It was also noted for Mrs. Sanders' beautiful flower garden. The rear second-story bed room and bath rooms appear to have been added by the Sanders' in 1890's. Originally the mantel in the living room had a lintel finished with beautiful decorative tiles, but these were removed by a member of the family when the house was vacated. In the northeast bed room of the main house, second story, there was for many years a decorative frieze about 18 inches deep, made in sections. The frieze was painted in water color by Dr. Sanders' daughter, Mary. The motif was peach blossoms on a blue background, as taken from the natural sprays of flowers brought in from the trees in the yard, many different ones being used, such that no repetition of design occurred. This frieze was probably executed in the 1870's and remained until very recent years.

Among the owners, agents, trustees, etc., other than those already named, were the following important personages in the history of Illinois and Jacksonville: Reverend John M. Ellis (third private owner of the site),

Judge Samuel D. Lockwood, Julian M. Sturtevant,
James D. Dunlap, David A. Smith, and Judge James
Berdan.

References:

Pioneer Women of Morgan County--Georgia L.
Osborne--1925--Page 255.

Extract from Reminiscences--Mrs. Julia Carter--1886

Journal of the Ill. State Historical Society--1925

Notes from Abstract--

The Porter Clay--Sanders Place--Ensley Moore--
Jacksonville Daily Journal--May 31, 1917

(Approved)

Clarence Buckingham
Jacksonville, Illinois
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Reviewed 1926 by H.C.F.